

NATIONAL BISON RANGE

Moiese, Montana

ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT

Calendar Year 1995

U.S. Department of the Interior

Fish and Wildlife Service

NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM

REVIEWS AND APPROVALS

NATIONAL BISON RANGE

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ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT

Calendar Year 1995

David Wiseman

Refuge Manager

5/21/98

Date

J. Berry

Refuge Supervisor Review

6-24-98

Date

Paul E. Gertler

PAUL E. GERTLER
Regional Office Approval

6/26/98

Date

INTRODUCTION

The National Bison Range, located in Sanders and Lake Counties, Montana, near Moiese, includes an area of 18,497 acres. Acts of Congress established it of May 23, 1908, primarily for the preservation of the animal for which it was named.

The overall mission of the National Bison Range is to maintain a representative herd of plains bison, or buffalo, under reasonably natural conditions, to ensure the preservation of the species for continued public enjoyment.

Since establishment, however, other big game animals have been introduced onto the area and current management emphasis is directed toward species diversity. Other big game animals inhabiting the Range include Rocky Mountain elk, bighorn sheep, mule deer, white-tailed deer, pronghorn antelope, and mountain goats.

Range elevation varies from 2,585 feet at headquarters to 4,885 feet at High Point on Red Sleep Mountain, the highest point on the Range.

The portion of the Flathead Valley in which the Range is located, has a microclimate usually characterized by relatively mild winter temperatures and little wind. Snow cover melts quickly at lower elevations. Sub-zero weather is uncommon. Summer temperatures seldom exceed 100 degrees. Precipitation averages 12.63 inches annually at Range headquarters with slightly more at higher elevations. The growing season averages 90-110 days. Freezing conditions generally occur from late November through March.

The Range is essentially a small, low-rolling mountain connected to the Mission Mountain Range by a gradually descending spur. Much of the Range was once surrounded by prehistoric Lake Missoula which was formed by a glacial dam on the Clark Fork River. The lake attained a maximum elevation of 4,200 feet. Old beach lines are still evident on north-facing slopes.

Topsoil on the Range is generally shallow and mostly underlain with rock which is exposed in many areas, forming ledges and talus slopes. Soils over the major portion of the Range were developed from materials weathered from strongly folded pre-Cambrian quartzite and argillite bedrock. These soils are well drained, steep, and range from very shallow to moderately deep in parent material. They have a loamy surface horizon with near neutral pH, high organic matter content, and varying degrees of rock fragment. Except for surface soils, lower horizons have a loamy texture with rock fragment dispersals. Water percolation rates are high, thus soil erosion rates are minimal.

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A. HIGHLIGHTS

Manager, David Wiseman arrived on duty March 6th. The Range had been without a Manager since April 1994. Assistant Manager Bill West was Acting Manager until the arrival of Wiseman.

Tribal Sovereignty and NBR management dominated much of Manager Wiseman's time. See Section J-4.

A photo of staff member Darren Thomas, herding buffalo, was selected for the cover of the area telephone book.

Bill West was detailed to the Arthur Carhart Wilderness Center on August 7. This is a one year's detail. Pat Gonzales, Project Leader at Lee Metcalf NWR, assisted NBR staff when needed.

All staff were furloughed November 14 - 19, with Dave Wiseman designated as the essential staff person. The staff, except Wiseman were again furloughed December 16, 1995 through the first week in January 1996.

Twenty-five elk were removed from the refuge and transplanted to the Ashley Lake, Marion, Montana area, near Kalispell, Montana. See Section G-15b.

B. CLIMATIC CONDITIONS

January was dominated by ice storms and icy conditions. Low snowpack brought concerns about summer drought. Snow depth at High Point reached six inches. The Red Sleep Mountain Drive was closed all day on May 26, and temporarily on June 6 and 7 due to snow at upper elevations. Flooding occurred 50 miles west of the Bison Range in November. Local schools were closed for one day in December due to a tornado watch.

Weather patterns of note include the months of December 1994, January 1995, and February 1995, when the highest and lowest temperatures occurred in February with 72°F as the high and 1°F as the low. The three month total precipitation was 1.08 inches, which was 50% of the 45 year average of 2.15 inches.

Precipitation for the spring months of March through May was 2.54 inches. March and April precipitation were well below average. Eight days of precipitation (1.47 inches) in May brought the average up to 71% of normal. The low temperature of 0°F occurred in March and the high temperature of 87°F occurred in May.

The summer months of June through August had near normal precipitation, 4.9 inches. The high temperature, 96°F was recorded in August and both June and August had a low of 31°F.

Autumn 1995 had above normal precipitation. The precipitation for the months of September, October, and November totaled 4.8 inches, compared to a 45 year average of 3.4 inches. The first recorded snow at the weather station was October 29, 1997. Ninety-one degrees Fahrenheit in September was the high for the period, with 4°F the low in the month of November. Precipitation for the year totaled 14.39 inches, 114% of the 45 year average.

Table 1. 1995 Weather Conditions

MONTH	TEMPERATURE		PRECIPITATION		SNOW
	High	Low	1995	45-Yr. Avg.	
January	58	4	.43	.80	2.25
February	72	1	.64	.57	4.50
March	70	0	.64	.73	2.25
April	68	16	.45	1.03	
May	87	21	1.47	1.81	
June	90	31	2.51	2.01	
July	94	35	1.45	1.02	
August	96	31	.94	1.08	
September	91	21	1.48	1.09	
October	79	12	2.08	.89	1.00
November	67	4	1.21	.76	0.72
December	53	3	1.09	.78	0.72
TOTALS			14.39	12.57	10.89

C. LAND ACQUISITION

Nothing to Report

D. PLANNING

1. General

Nothing to report.

2. Management Plan

Attempts to reach agreement with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CS&KT) on a compact of programs run by this Refuge included discussions of potential management scenarios, but no finished plan materialized by year's end.

3. Public Participation

An anomaly of the CS&K Tribes proposal to compact The National Bison Range, all ancillary properties and programs, was that the entire negotiation process has not been open to public participation. The 1994 Amendments to the Indian Self-Determination Act allow compacting of any Department of Interior Program by Indian Tribes if the particular Tribe has Self Governance Status and if the Tribe can show a geographic, historical, or cultural nexus to the program. The Act also closes the entire process to public participation unless both nations want to make it public. Since CS&KT did not want the public involved, FWS was obligated to do the same.

4. Compliance with Environmental and Cultural Resource Mandates (CECRA)

Nothing to Report. Self governance negotiations were determined to "not" be subject to NEPA.

5. Research and Investigations

Nitrogen-Cycling Study - Gary Belovsky and Jennifer Slade, Utah State University.

This first year study is to help in the understanding of nutrient dynamics in rangeland. The critical question is how important are herbivores in controlling rangeland productivity by influencing nutrient dynamics, and do different herbivores differentially impact these dynamics.

Avian Predation on Grasshoppers - Gary Belovsky and Jennifer Slade, Utah State University.

This study is to determine whether or not predators can control prey populations, and how this control might change under different conditions. Birds only appear to be able to limit grasshoppers in years when grasshoppers cannot attain densities because of poor plant growth, i.e. drought.

Chrysolina quadrigemina Research - J. Lawler, Utah State University.

This is a two year study of the population dynamics of *Chrysolina quadrigemina*. The study is an attempt to investigate the feasibility of St. Johnswort control through the elevation of beetle densities. The study combines field sampling with an experiment using potted St. Johnswort plants. The second part of the study involves experimental manipulations of beetle densities on plants to investigate the effects of density on reproduction and survival. Preliminary analysis of the data shows no effect of beetle density on either adult survivorship or egg production. The data does point toward a possible density dependent effect on egg production.

Ancestral Bison Genetics and Inbreeding based on Mitochondrial DNA Analysis. Karen Chambers, Pennsylvania State University.

This study proposes to combine archaeology and genetics, using the latest methods of DNA extraction from skeletal material several thousand years old with a genetic survey of modern bison populations to draw a comparison between genetic variation in modern bison and those which pre-date the severe depletion of herds. The D-loop region of the mitochondrial DNA will be analyzed to ascertain effects of bottlenecks and founding events on bison populations. Mitochondrial DNA is inherited only from the female, not equally from both parents as in nuclear DNA. Mitochondrial DNA will be extracted from four modern bison populations and from four archaeological bison populations. Tests will be made from archaeological sites in Kentucky, Nebraska, and Wyoming. Modern sites will include the National Bison Range herd among others.

The researcher drew blood from all calves in the fall of 1993. It was reported that some spoilage or contamination problem occurred and only 31 samples survived to be tested. No formal report has been received but Chambers stated by phone that one animal of the 31 tested, bull #3033 born in 1993, showed evidence of cow genes. She somehow projected a probable 3 for every 90 animals from this small sample with one reactor. She compared this with 6 in 90 in the Fort Niobrara herd (90 being her surviving sample size there). Chambers stated that this gene introduction probably occurred in the 1800's and this incidence is unusually low compared to other herds. No attempt was made to test molecular DNA which would show the rest of the gene structure for these samples. She states that removing this animal would make no difference since mitochondrial DNA is not transmitted by the male. The bull has normal appearance but has been separated from the herd.

This report was prepared by Marcy Bishop.

The Conservation of Genetic Resources in Bighorn Sheep - John T. Hogg, Craighead Wildlife-Wildlands Institute, Inc., Missoula, Montana.

Initial objectives as initiated in 1988 were to:

1. Determine whether reduced genetic variation generates detectable deleterious effects in current environments and in natural populations of bighorn sheep.
2. Provide managers with the means for identifying those herds that are vulnerable to the erosion of their genetic resources.
3. Provide managers with guidelines for using population size enhancement and artificial migration as tools for preventing loss of variation in those herds determined to be at risk.

This research program addresses the issue of genetic viability in populations of large, polygynous mammals generally and bighorn sheep specifically. The research now has two major facets:

1. The development of empirically sound, general principles of genetic management in bighorn sheep and related species of large mammals. Principles that may then be incorporated into each and every facet of a population, regional or species-wide management plan. Effective genetic management requires a regional rather than a population-specific approach. Consequently, this work promises to encourage a more ecosystem approach in which all relevant considerations (habitat, genetics, disease, etc.) are addressed among the various managing agencies and parties in the private sector.
2. The first application of these principles to the design of a specific program of genetic management in the complex of native bighorn herds inhabiting the East Front of the Rocky Mountains from Waterton Park (Canada) south to Rogers Pass in Western Montana.

Consequences of Natural Variation in Early Experience in Pronghorns - John A. Byers, University of Idaho.

This long term study was originated in 1981 and has been carried out by John Byers and his assistants. This basic behavioral study relates the experiences of pronghorn fawns during early development to their social organization, dominance and reproductive success during their adult life. It has been concluded that the first born fawns each year become dominate in the pronghorn social structure throughout their lives. Also monitored were longevity, birth and survival rates which are of value for management purposes.

E. ADMINISTRATION

1. Personnel

1. David Wiseman, Refuge Manager, GS-13, PFT
2. William West, Assistant Manager, GS-11, PFT
3. Marcella Bishop, Outdoor Recreation Planner, GS-9, PFT
4. Joan Krantz, Admin. Assistant, GS-7, PFT
5. Robert King, Maintenance Foreman, WS-7, PFT
6. Loren Clary, Maintenance Worker, WG-8, PFT
7. Darren Thomas, Maintenance Worker, WG-6, Career Seasonal
8. Lynn Clark, Biological Technician, GS-7, PFT
9. Kyle Todd, Park Ranger, GS-6, TFT-Term
10. Timothy Driscoll, Animal Caretaker, WG-5, TFT-Term
11. Delbert (Skip) Palmer, Animal Caretaker, WG-5, TFT-Term
12. Brent Woodger, Animal Caretaker, WG-5, TFT-Term
13. Patricia Jamieson, Park Ranger (Reception), GS-5, TFT-Term
14. Terri Middlemist, Park Ranger (Reception), GS-5, TPT-Term
15. Tana Novak, Park Range, (Reception), GS-3, TFT
16. Lonnie Trunko, Park Ranger (Reception), GS-3, TFT
17. Dean M. Vaughan, Bio Tech (Private Lands), GS-6, PFT
18. Emily Miwa, Student Trainee, GS-3
19. Bill Petersen, Law Enforcement, Flint Hills, 8/22/97-10/3/95
20. Sandy McGraw, Bio.-Tech., GS-4, TFT, 9/5/95-10/4/95
21. Lindley Garner, Student Trainee, GS-9, began August 1995

Youth Program

22. Andrew Buchi, YCC, 6/5/95-8/10/95
23. Nick Clary, YCC, 6/5/95-8/10/95
24. Melanie Goodwin, YCC, 6/5/95-8/10/95
25. Matt Kocubinski, YCC, 6/5/95-8/10/95
26. Paula Jones, YCC, 6/5/96-8/10/95

Volunteers

27. Charles Keller, bird surveys
26. Shirley Keller, bird surveys, public use
27. Mike Larson, public use
28. Ervin Davis, bird banding, public use
29. Eileen Hostetler, pubic use
30. Jennifer Hauer, public use

- 31. Eve Stuckey, Project Tanager
- 32. Katherine Roberts, Project Tanager

Lake County Employee

- 31. Rachael Sykes, Bio-Insect Tech.

Tim Driscoll, Skip Palmer, and Brent Woodger were converted to Term positions in February. Dave Wiseman was selected as Manager of NBR and began work in March.

In April, Special Achievement Awards were presented to Marcy Bishop, Lynn Clark, Joan Krantz, and Bill West for performance during the ten month NBR was without a manager.

Term positions of GS-5 were accepted by Pat Jamieson and Terri Middlemist, to staff the Visitor Center, in June. Tana Novak and Lonnie Trunko were selected for the two new GS-2, Temporary Full-Time Visitor Center positions. Kyle Todd began as Park Ranger/Patrolman.

Bill West was detailed to the Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Facility at the Ninemile Ranger Station, Huson, Montana. The detail is August 1995 through August 1996.

The Public Use Program received some help with the detail of Bill Petersen from Flint Hills NWR. He assisted with Law Enforcement, Public Assistance, and Environmental Education from late August through October 3.

A Special Achievement Award was presented to Dave Wiseman in October.



Manager Dave Wiseman receiving Achievement Award from Assistant Manager Bill West.

Table 2. Five year comparison of NBR personnel.

	Permanent			
	Full-Time	Career-Seasonal	Term	Temporary
1995	8	1	6	6
1994	7	2		7
1993	7	2		7
1992	6	2		7
1991	7	2		6

The above table does not include 1PFT and 1 temporary position at the Creston Substation for management of Swan River NWR and Flathead County WPA's.

2. Youth Programs

The youth program had 5 enrollees in the YCC program. All the youth assisted the maintenance crew with repairs and maintenance on the new trailer office, irrigating, fencing, painting, weed wacking, mowing, and cleaning saddles and vehicles.

The YCC enrollees worked a total of 1684 hours. The total value to the Refuge of this work was \$1,136.00.

3. Manpower Programs

Nothing to report.

4. Volunteer Program

The volunteer program continued to be an important source of supplemental manpower for Bison Range Activities. A total of 273 individuals worked 4,620 hours on the Refuge this year. This came to a total of \$38,115 worth of work for an expenditure of \$7,625 in supplies and staff time.

Erv Davis, a retired teacher from nearby Charlo, volunteered almost 400 hours, working in the Visitor Center, at Roundup, for Game Counts and on a bluebird project. He maintained a line of almost 100 bluebird houses and banded 912 bluebirds on and near the Bison Range.

Volunteers Shirley and Charles Keller each spent approximately 200 hours on bird surveys on the Range. Volunteers also worked on Project Tanager. Other wildlife surveys included the annual Big Game Count where 195 high school and university students assisted staff, volunteering a total of 1,044 hours.

Staff had the help of the 43 volunteers who worked 451 hours at the annual Bison Roundup. About half handled corral gates or assisted with vaccinations and age branding. The other half helped with visitors and school groups.

Table 3. Volunteers and volunteer hours for 1995.

Activity	Number of Volunteers	Volunteer Hours
Wildlife Census	195	1344
Bird Surveys	4	640
Bison Roundup	43	451
Education Program	3	105
Habitat Improvement	36	641
Antler Collection	24	606
Visitor Center	7	643
Bluebird Houses and Banding	3	150
General Assistance	3	40
TOTALS	318*	4620

*The number of total volunteers in the table exceeds the actual number of volunteers to the Range since some people volunteer in more than one category.

5. Funding

Table 4 lists funding for the entire Refuge Complex which includes the National Bison Range, Ninepipe, Pablo, and Swan River NWRs, and the Northwest Montana Wetlands Management District.

Table 4. A five-year comparison of funding for the NBR Complex.

FY	1261-2 Base	6860	Other & 1262 FLEX	O & M Total	8610	YCC
1995	574,715	35,000	128,600	738,315	10,100	8,000
1994	555,050	34,700	130,925	720,675	8,000	8,500
1993	464,200	42,000	178,000	684,200	7,800	11,400
1992	413,500	42,000	165,400	620,900	9,100	8,400
1991	428,000	42,000	76,000	546,000	10,500	6,500

There were \$4,600 for Bird Surveys, \$10,000 Challenge Grant, \$30,500 Fire Management, \$10,000 in Drought Relief, \$4,500 underground tank removal, and \$79,000 MMS Flex funds in the FY95 "other" category. However, these funds were not included in the Base and there is no guarantee they will be available in future years.



Volunteers Charles and Shirley Keller with appreciation bison afghan.

6. Safety

Safety meetings attended by staff are listed below. Informal on-site safety meetings were held in the field as necessary.

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| March | A video was viewed entitled "America At Work: Living with HIV" and a short discussion was held. Workbooks were passed out and employees were given 4 days to complete the workbook and return it to the assistant. |
| May | The staff discussed safety factors and incidents in preparation for the Range Ride. They discussed radio contacts in case of accidents. Emergency radio channel was verified and telephone numbers were checked. |
| June | Entire staff was recertified in First Aid and CPR with a special class provided by the St. Ignatius Ambulance at NBR. |
| September | Lynn Clark led a discussion of Big Game Census. Employees were designated areas, assigned equipment and trucks. Possible safety hazards were identified. Dave Wiseman led a discussion on the annual Roundup. Each employee's particular job was assigned and safety factors were discussed. |

There were several reportable accidents in 1995, 2 involving staff and 5 with visitors.

Winter's icy conditions, resulted in a fall by Marcy Bishop on January 11. She fell forward striking her face (cheekbone) on the Visitor Center back sidewalk. She was examined by the doctor and returned to work.

In May, first aid was given to a woman whose husband had burned her ear while trying to curl her hair with a curling iron. Both husband and wife were possibly intoxicated.

Life Flight out of Missoula was called to transport a woman whose horse had walked on her during the annual Saddle Club Ride.

Kyle Todd assisted a family whose child had fallen and had a slight cut on the head. No other assistance was needed.

On September 3, Lonnie Trunko administered first aid to a child who had been stung.

The Mission Valley ambulance was called in September to assist a visitor who was experiencing extreme abdominal pains. Her husband followed in *their private vehicle*.

On September 27, the maintenance crew were working buffalo in the corrals preparing for Roundup. Bob King was working one of the gates when several buffalo hit the gate causing it to slam forward. The rope controlling the gate was too short causing Bob's

hand to be smashed between the guardrail and the rope. His hand was x-rayed, no broken bones were found. Bob returned to work the next day.

NBR staff responded to several incidents which occurred off the Refuge. In January, freezing rain, fog and extremely icy road conditions were the norm. Bison Range staff responded to two accidents near the Range which resulted in 8 hours of lost power. A semi and a logging truck went off the same corner three days apart, tearing out power lines, transformers and railroad track. A day later, a local resident slid into the side of a train at the next crossing. Again in May, a vehicle sheared off a power pole near the Range resulting in a 4 hour power loss. A wreck near Ninepipe was responded to in July.

Corrective and preventive safety measures in 1995 included:

1. Mission Valley Power inspected transformers related to underground power to the Bison Corrals. PCB contamination was leaking from one transformer. West contacted RO for contamination assistance. The transformer was replaced.
2. The entire staff was recertified in First Aid and CPR.
3. Water testing was done on a regular basis. Several noncompliance water tests were received. Shocking the well on a monthly basis with chlorine appeared to eliminated any bad water test.
4. Chain saw training relating to wildfire control and an update of fire truck operation was completed by fire staff.

7. Technical Assistance

Many requests, both telephone and written, were responded to by National Bison Range staff. Individuals, organizations, and agencies requested information on bison management, husbandry, facilities, sources of meat, breeding stock, by-products and sale prices.

Marcy Bishop assisted visiting representatives of the new Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal Cultural Center with display information, herbarium storage methods and visitor needs, in January.

During the month of March, information on wildlife rehabilitation and permits were provided to Sandy DeBruin, a Pre-Vet student. EE program development materials were supplied to Upper Souris NWR and Divorsak Dam. Information on brucellosis in bison was furnished for a University of Montana graduate project, and bison history and management data was given to a Salish Kootenai College student. Information was provided to Wyoming Fish and Game on bison fencing and management.

Professional assistance was provided for six graduate and undergraduate papers on bison, albinos, brucellosis, cowbirds and bio-control of weeds, during April. Additional assistance was provided to four secondary level students for special projects. Jackson Buffalo Ranch and a Yellowstone Park Winter Ranger received a tour and information on management and the bison corrals.

Staff in June assisted a private rancher with bison corral information and guided him on a tour of our facilities. We also provided soil education materials for a summer water program at Montana State University and demographic information for a senior project at Washington University. A Customer Service monitoring program pilot with the University of Idaho was initiated.

In November, wetland production and use data were furnished to a University of Montana student for a thesis study. Wiseman provided bison information to an Salish Kootenai College student.

In addition to her ORP duties, Marcy Bishop continued providing technical assistance to all wildlife interests in the area as a bird rehabilitator. This year, Marcy checked, evaluated and/or assisted in the treatment in 20 bird injury cases involving the treatment of six owls, one golden eagle, two game birds, and eleven non-game birds.

8. Other

In January Bill West attended the society for Range Management National Meeting in Phoenix, Arizona. Exotic Plants on Public Lands was the theme for the conference.

A photo of staff member Darren Thomas, herding buffalo, was selected for the cover of the area telephone book, which came out in March. Bill West attended a Media Training in Denver, Colorado, on dealing with the news media.

Throughout the year, Dave Wiseman attended numerous meetings regarding Tribal Self-governance, the Service's Trust Responsibilities, and negotiations regarding the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes proposal for compacting some to all of the operations on the National Bison Range.

In April, Marcy Bishop participated in the Charlo Grade School Science Fair and Earth Day Celebration by teaching 5 classes on mammals and their adaptations. Lynn Clark attended a two week workshop on land bird monitoring at Point Reyes Bird Observatory, in California. Wiseman, West, Vaughan, Washtak, and King attended Aviation Safety Training. Dean Vaughan also attended Wetland Reserve Program training in Bozeman, Montana.

Bill West gave several talks and presentations throughout the year in regards to weeds on public lands and weed management on the Range. The groups represented were both local and national in scope. He also informed many groups about the Service Conservation Easement program. During May, he appeared in a PBS Special on purple

loosestrife bio-control. He was also featured in a Missoulian newspaper article which stressed a similar approach/commitment to weed control as to fire control on public lands. In August, he attended the National Weed Summit in Denver, Colorado, and met with the leaders of the four federal land agencies, including John Rogers of FWS. Weed problems at NBR were discussed as an example of the issue on all Federal lands.

Dean Vaughan attended a Geomorphology Course, in Helena, Montana during May.

In June, Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Ada Deer and her deputy Mike Anderson were in the area for the signing of the Tribal Retrocession Agreement. Anderson visited the Range briefly and was given a short tour with Refuge staff and Tribal officials. Dean Vaughan attended a week of Corps of Engineers wetlands training in Bozeman, Montana. Lynn Clark completed both the Forest and Riparian Stewardship classes.

Tina Dobrinski and Sue Semo were at the Range for an Administrative Review in July. Joan Krantz traveled to Denver, Colorado, for Remote Data Entry and Payroll Training. West participated in a seminar on shooting steel shot, conducted by Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks consultant Tom Roster.

A public meeting on the request by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes for compacting, was held in August, by Assistant Director Dan Ashe of the FWS Washington office and Susan Brooke, an aide to Senator Conrad Burns. Kyle Todd covered the FWS booth at the State Fair in Great Falls, Montana for two days. Lynn Clark judged the wildlife, forestry, and soils 4-H projects at the Lake County Junior Fair in Ronan, Montana.

Dale Henry from the Regional Office held a staff briefing in September, with NBR staff, discussing the potential effects of negotiations and annual funding agreement concerning the Tribal Self-governance Act, the Confederated Salish-Kootenai Tribes, and the National Bison Range. Sheri Fetherman, Regional Office Chief of Education and Visitor Services, and Shannon Heath, wildlife biologist out of Montana's Ecological Services came for a public use visit.

Revenue sharing checks were delivered in April to County officials in Lake County (\$25,048) for NBR, Swan River NWR and Lake County WPAs, and in Sanders County (\$7,669) for NBR. Both checks were down 1% from last year.

Total receipts, as shown in Table 5, were up from 1994. This increase is a doubling of the entrance fees received from 1994 to 1995. It should be noted that in 1994, drought and fire concerns caused the closing of parts of the Refuge, and loss of entrance fee revenues.

Table 5. Receipts collected at NBR in 1995 for deposit to the National Wildlife Refuge Fund.

Item/Activity	Receipts
Bison Sales	\$95,964.00
Entrance Fees	56,692.00
Antler Collection Fee (Boy Scouts)	113.35
Other Special Use Permits	688.60
TOTAL	\$153,457.95

F. HABITAT MANAGEMENT

1. General

Nothing to report.

2. Wetlands

Oxbow wetlands along Mission Creek, ponds in the Nature Trail Education Area, the Ravalli potholes, Looper Pond and other natural and artificial wetlands along Trisky and Pauline Creeks provided habitat for ducks and a variety of other marsh and water birds.

Private lands technician Dean Vaughan worked out of the NBR office on many Partners for Wildlife wetland projects in Northwest Montana. These are reported in the Northwest Montana Wetland District Narrative Report.

3. Forests

A Montana Conservation Corp (MCC) crew held a training session on chain saws at NBR in February and March. Their crew then arrived for a week of work on thinning second growth Douglas fir. Thinning maintains openings for moving buffalo and reduces the fire ladder effect from grassland to more mature forest. The MCC crew returned for two additional days to cut up usable timber into firewood which was donated to tribal elders. Tribal Job Corp students transported the wood.

A University of Montana recreation class cleared second growth Douglas fir in April.

4. Croplands

Nothing to report.

5. Grasslands

Parker 3-Step transects were not run in 1995.

6. Other Habitats

Nothing to report.

7. Grazing

The year began with bison wintering on the south side of the refuge in Lower South and Upper South Pastures. The 1994 drought caused watering areas in the Southwest pasture to dry up. Thus there was little use of that pasture. Since the two bison herds were combined back into one herd in 1992 it has been imperative that they stay in the three south pastures all winter if we are to have them visible from the tour routes in the other 5 pastures during the months that visitors frequent the Refuge. They were in the south side pastures from January through March resulting in 900 AUMs.

In late March and early April, all bison were gathered into one group and moved to Highpoint unit (300 AUMs). They were moved at approximately 6 week intervals to Lower West (400 AUMs), Upper West (450 AUMs), High Point (350 AUMs), Mission Creek (450 AUMs), and Alexander Basin (500 AUMs). The new electric fencing project seems to be working as bison are staying where they are put more often. Completion of electric fencing that reinforces the interior fences with two off set wires on each side of the fence has been very successful. To get compliance from the animals the whole herd was run through small electrified paddocks at the corrals for up to three days. There they each got their own taste of electricity and earned a healthy respect for fences they had come to ignore in recent years. Close attention to fences, identifying and culling fence jumpers had worked for years, but downsizing of the maintenance crew left less time for riding fences and the bison had all acquired a taste for breaking down interior fences. However, no exterior fences have ever been breeched.

There are now nearly 40 miles of smooth, high tensile electric wire on these interior fences. Two powerful Gallagher chargers pump 10,000 volts through the fence. The new technology lowers the amps and ups the voltage eliminating danger of electrocution or fires.

The herd was moved into Alexander Basin Pasture just prior to roundup. After roundup they were turned onto the south pastures for the winter. A new concrete water tank and redevelopment of the associated spring in Firehole Canyon made the southwest pasture available to the bison.

The bison were again in the south side pastures, November through December (600 AUMs). Overall AUMs utilized by bison are estimated to be approximately 3,950 units. Foraging by other big game species utilized an estimated 1600 additional AUM's for a total removed of approximately 5550 AUMs.

8. Haying

No hay was cut on the Refuge this year. Approximately 20 ton of hay was purchased to feed 12 government horses and the bison kept in the display pasture.

9. Fire Management

NBR crews responded to the following fires:

- | | |
|------------|--|
| June 19 | The Ravalli Fire was a lightening caused grass fire that burned one acre. The fire was reported at 6:30 p.m. Clark and Todd dug a line around the fire and checked for hot spots. Todd rechecked the fire at 9:00 p.m. and reported it out. |
| July 29-30 | The Dirty Bad Fire and the Repeat Fire were located in upper northwest Fire Hole Canyon. Two separate snags were burning. These snags were in an area inaccessible to the fire tanker. Hand crews and a four-wheeler were used to bring in water. The snag in the Dirty Bad fire was felled, a fire line dug around it, and the crew watered and watched the fire through the night. The snag in the Repeat Fire was monitored throughout the night and declared out the next afternoon. |

10. Pest Control

The 18th bio-control insect, *Urophora stylata*, a seed head gall fly for bull thistle was released on the Range in March.

Rachel Sykes, Montana State University, set up purple loosestrife bio-control projects and Rich Malecki of Cornell brought eggs of the insect *Hylobius transversovittatus* for release in June. This is the 19th bio-control agent now on NBR.

Aerial spraying was completed on 80 acres of Dalmatian toadflax and 40 acres of sulfur cinquefoil and spotted knapweed on the east side of the Range, Ravalli Hill, Twin Canyons and Telephone Mountain Draw. Celestine Duncan, weed management consultant, did several chemical test plots to determine the effectiveness of various pesticides and levels of application on controlling St. Johnswort. She stated that high populations of *Crysolina* beetles were present at the time of application. Preliminary figures from a survey being done by an Upward Bound group showed approximately 74% of these perennial plants have been stopped at ground level in 1995 or show severe foliage damage from *Chrysolina* or its larva. The greatest damage to St. Johnswort occurs in years when the insect is doing this kind of damage.

A new interest in goatweed (St. Johnswort) has also come about with two people requesting plants for research. A tincture of this plant is said to simulate the antidepressant drugs Prozac or Zoloft. This request came in July.

Four releases of bio-control insects were made including: 600 adult *Brachypteralus pulicarius*, a Nitidulid beetle that feeds on Dalmatian Toadflax seed heads, 500 root weevil eggs, *Hylobius transversovittatus*, and 150 adult leaf feeding beetles, *Galerucella californiensis* and *G. pusilla* on purple loosestrife. *Chrysolina* beetles continued to work on goatweed. There was a large hatch of the recently introduced Aplocera moth, which also feeds on St. Johnswort, in July.

Most control of hounds tongue was completed by hand/tool removal by Youth Conservation Corp. and staff, approximately 40 man days of work were used to control this plant.

11. Water Rights

Nothing to report.

12. Wilderness and Special Areas

Nothing to report.

13. WPA Easement Monitoring

Nothing to report.



River otters playing in Mission Creek.

G. WILDLIFE

1. Wildlife Diversity

The National Bison Range has a wide inherent diversity of habitat types and wildlife species. Special measures taken to maintain diversity over the years include: control of non-native plants, the development and maintenance of watering troughs and ponds, the installation of nesting structures for Canada geese and wood ducks along Mission Creek and the maintenance of 60 bluebird nest boxes with volunteer help. There has been special concern and recent increased monitoring of neotropical migrant bird nesting areas. Such diversity is enjoyed by visitors who come to see the large animals and also have the opportunity to observe the smaller wildlife of this palouse prairie ecosystem.



Bull elk in West Loop. PJ

2. Endangered and/or Threatened Species

Bald eagles are seen most often in the fall and winter. One adult bald eagle was seen along Mission Creek during the January aerial survey. Five bald eagles were spotted at the front gate in March. Bald eagles were also noted on the breeding bird surveys with one recorded along the Jocko River and one along Mission Creek in June. A badly injured eagle was recovered from Tribal Wildlife Officers in March. The eagle was euthanized by Refuge staff and turned over to FWS Special Agent Branzell.

3. Waterfowl

a. Ducks

Duck numbers vary drastically on the Range by season and wetland conditions in the valley. Table 6 has the numbers for the Mission Creek count. No count was done in 1995 on Ravalli Ponds. Production estimates were calculated using 6% nest success, average brood size of 5.2 and a duckling survival rate of 70%. Nest success was calculated based on studies conducted by the University of Montana Coop Research unit. Average brood size was calculated using data obtained from brood counts in the Ninepipe area.

Table 6. 1995 NBR breeding duck pairs and estimated production on the National Bison Range.

Species	Number Breeding Pairs	Estimated Production
Mission Creek		
Mallard	25	5
Cinnamon Teal	4	0
Wood Duck	2	0
Gadwall	4	1
Blue-Winged Teal	1	0
TOTAL	33	7

The 1995 Mid-winter aerial survey of Mission Creek , Post Creek, and Sabine Creek showed 7375 mallards and 2 common mergansers.

b. Geese

The Mid-winter aerial survey of Mission Creek , Post Creek, and Sabine Creek showed 119 Canada geese. Ray Washtak and Dean Vaughan flew a goose breeding pair census in April, totaling 21 pairs. The Canada goose production count showed 35 goslings.

4. Marsh and Water Birds

Great blue herons and double crested cormorants were observed during the Mission Creek breeding bird surveys and along the Jocko River on the south side of the Range.

5. Shorebirds, Gulls, Terns and Allied Species

Common snipe were readily observed along Mission Creek, Indian Springs, and Pauline Creek. Spotted sandpipers were recorded on the breeding bird surveys along Mission Creek. A long billed curlew was spotted by visitors along Mission Creek in May.

6. Raptors

Common nesting species included great-horned owls, red-tailed hawks, northern harriers and American kestrels. American kestrels were recorded 65 times on the breeding bird survey, red-tailed hawks 40 times, and northern harriers 11 times. Osprey frequently flew around the nature ponds and Mission Creek, with one being recorded on each of the two Mission Creek breeding bird surveys, and one on the Jocko River breeding bird survey in June. A great-horned owl was seen in the picnic area several times over the summer.

Golden eagles were a fairly common site along the tour route near high point and the Basin. They were recorded three times on the Trisky Creek breeding bird survey. They were also recorded once along Mission Creek. There was an active nest near the primary pronghorn antelope fawning areas in Alexander Basin and near big horn sheep areas in Trisky Creek. They have preyed on the young of both pronghorn and sheep.

A dead golden eagle was found along Headquarters Ridge by the Boy Scouts.

7. Other Migratory Birds

Volunteer Erv Davis maintained the bluebird boxes on the refuge again this year. He also banded females and young. See section G-16.

West, Bishop, and Jamieson assisted with the Audubon Christmas Bird Count on December 17. The count area is part of the Ninepipe Circle, and includes the Mission Creek and Alexander Basin area of the Range. They counted 2,664 birds of 30 different species. The greatest numbers are as follows:

Mallard - 1200	Canada geese - 403
Bohemian waxwing - 850	House finch - 37
Black-billed magpie - 37	Common goldeneye - 37

The count was up almost 1,000 birds from both 1993 (1,664 birds and 33 species) and 1994 (1,494 birds of 13 species).

The Bison Range participated in Project Tanager again this year. Volunteer Kathy Roberts found Western tanagers singing at seven of the eight sites surveyed.

The six original extensive surveys, three intensive surveys and the two new surveys set up in 1994 were all run three times during the 1995 season. Vegetation monitoring was completed on all plots. A final report on the initial surveys was sent to the Regional Office Non-game Wildlife Coordinator. Our data suggests that grasshopper sparrows and

vesper sparrows may respond positively to bison grazing. Two new transects were established in the winter grazing areas of the Bison Range so a comparison could be made between summer and winter grazing effects. These transects will be run three times during the 1996 breeding season.

Table 7 summarizes the survey results. It does not include the Pablo route or the two new survey routes started in 1994.

**Table 7. A summary of 1995 breeding Bird Survey
Transect Results on the National Bison Range.**

Transect	Times Surveyed	Habitat	Number
	1995		Observations
T1	3	Narrow Riparian Pauline Creek	650
T2	3	Grassland/Forest High Point Area	507
T3	3	Open Grasslands Lower West Unit	545
T4	3	Narrow Riparian Trisky Creek	676
T5	3	Open Grassland Alexander Basin	578
T6	3	Wide Riparian Mission Creek	1044
T5 INT	3	Indian Springs	530
T6 INT	3	Mission Creek	547

There were 16 species that were tallied over 100 times on the surveys. These, with the number of observations for each, included:

Western meadowlark - 1404	Blackbilled magpie - 210
Redwing blackbird - 507	Willow flycatcher - 177
American robin - 432	Morning dove - 148
Vesper sparrow - 396	Eastern kingbird - 147
Blackhead cowbird - 313	Northern oriole - 132
Rufous sided towhee - 290	Northern flycatcher - 121
House wren - 217	European starling - 118
Brewer's blackbird - 214	Tree swallow - 118

8. Game Mammals

a. Bison

The year began with 374 bison on the Range. Grazing use throughout the year is covered in Section F-7.

One three year old cow was found dead in early May. The cause of death was unknown. This carcass was turned over to the FWS Grizzly Bear Recovery Team for bear bait.

The first calf of the year was sighted on April 14 in the main herd and one was born in the Display Pasture a few days later.

Six bison were casualties of the rut (1-5 year bull, Lane; 1-8 year bull, Basin; 1-8 year bull, Indian Springs; 1 bull, Lane; 1-10 plus bull, Indian Springs). One nine year old bull was found dead at the head of Jon's Creek. A cow was found dead in the Creek Pasture along the south fence. A four year old cow was put down during Roundup. An injured six year old bull was put down by staff.

Approximately 350 bison were turned back out on the Range after roundup. Calves born this year totaled 76. This is 15 to 20 fewer than usual. Probable cause may be the drought causing depleted conditions of cows during the 1994 rut.

Ferdinand, a 19 year old bull, the oldest in several years, was put down in the fall. He lived in the Mission Creek bottom lands for several years and become so arthritic that at times he was unable to get up. He was found to have massive old injuries that would have terminated a lesser bull long ago.

The bison were moved to Alexander Basin on September 27th, prior to putting the herd in Elk Lane September 28 for Roundup. On September 26, staff removed the bison from the display pasture to run through Roundup. A new bull was put into the pasture the next day.

Buffalo were worked through the corrals on October 2 and 3. Vaccinations of Strain 19 for brucellosis were given and calves were branded with a number 5 on their right hip. Blood samples were taken from all calves for DNA research.

Nearly all the bison were weighed, and the results are summarized in Table 8. The heaviest animal was a ten-plus bull that weighed 2,056 pounds.

Table 8. Bison Weights at the 1995 NBR roundup.

Age	Males			Females		
	Weight Range	Number Weighed	Average Weight	Weight Range	Number Weighed	Average Weight
Calf	242-434	39	347	218-395	34	332
Yrlg.	500-870	50	711	455-840	46	636
2	830-1200	23	1013	730-960	31	871
3	995-1380	16	1220	795-1070	27	929
4	1360-1656	15	1534	940-1215	16	1042
5	1575-1820	9	1672	920-1090	17	1020
6	1680-1865	3	1742	865-1120	14	1056
7	1815-2045	2	1930	950-1145	13	1015
8	1760-1935	3	1561	935-1190	7	1013
9	1885	1	1885	880-1125	6	1024
10+	1625-2056	4	1875	995-1035	21	1032

There were 18 special branded buffalo identified during this year's Roundup as shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Special-branded bison identified at 1995 NBR roundup.

Special Brand	Age	Sex	Weights			Comments
			1993	1994	1995	
Bar Over 1	4	Bull	1145	1335	1595	Kansas Mother
Bar Under 1	4	Cow	905	----	1010	Kansas Mother
Bar Over 0	5	Bull	1130	1490	1630	Kansas Mother
Bar Under 9	6	Bull	----	1555	1725	Kansas Mother
19	6	Bull	1515	----	1680	Kansas Mother
91	6	Cow	1015	1015	1115	Kansas Mother
17	8	Cow	---	----	1170	
Bar Over 8	7	Cow	935	915	960	Kansas Mother
7 Left 8 Right	8	Cow	870	1125	935	Non-Vaccinate
Bar left spine	calf	Bull	---	---	320	Accidentally Bangs Vaccinated
Bar Over 4	11	Cow	1050	1000	1035	From Kansas
Bar Over 4	11	Cow	975	950	1010	From Kansas
Bar Over 4	11	Cow	875	790	795	From Kansas
Bar Over 4	11	Cow	----	955	980	From Kansas
Bar Under 4	11	Cow	1070	1015	1050	
1 Left 4 Right	14	Cow	1025	1020	980	
1 Left X Right	14	Cow	950	930	965	
1 Left T Right	14	Cow	955	935	905	

Cows brought here as calves from the Maxwell State Game Refuge in Kansas in 1984 are special branded. Their offspring, when identifiable, have been special branded since 1987 in

order to insure keeping the new blood in the herd. Other animals have been special branded as a means of keeping individual weight and longevity records. They are not removed from the herd in the annual sales and are allowed to live out their natural lives.

At the end of the year, there were 357 bison in the herd. The overall sex composition of the herd was 61% cows and 39% males. For 1994, there will be 165 breeding age cows.

**Table 10. Composition of NBR bison herds on
December 31, 1995**

Age	Male	Female	Total
Calf	40	36	76
1	32	41	73
2	20	28	48
3	15	23	38
4	18	11	29
5	8	17	25
6	4	13	17
7	1	13	14
8	1	11	12
9	0	7	7
10	0	5	5
11	1	5	6
12	0	0	0
13	0	0	0
14	0	4	4
15	0	1	1
16	0	0	0
17	0	2	2

b. Annual Winter Big Game Drive Census

The big game drive census was moved to the fall for the first time in 1995. It was scheduled twice in February and March, but was canceled both times due to fog and snow. Lynn Clark organized the Big Game Count for September 30. This was the Saturday before Roundup, and was chosen in part because all the bison would be gathered up into Elk Lane. Another benefit of the fall count is that age and sex ratios can be obtained, since deer and elk males and young are easy to identify. The area in unit 2 from the Bitterroot restroom to the bottom of Elk Lane and west to Tower II road was added to unit 3. Unit 2 now starts on Tower III.

Students came from the University of Montana, and Charlo, Polson, and Missoula High Schools. Spotters were asked to note age and sex composition as well as species this year. See Table 11 for results.

Table 11. Results of the 1995 NBR fall big game drive census.

Unit	<u>Number Counted</u>					
	Elk	Mule Deer	White-Tailed Deer	Pronghorn	Bighorn Sheep	Mountain Goat
1	26	0	137	3	0	0
2	0	48	42	14	0	0
3	28	65	0	10	0	0
4	2	2	0	0	0	40
5	0	28	0	0	0	24
6	20	22	0	0	42	9
7	55	75	0	31	0	1
8	7	6	23	35	0	0
ALL	138	246	202	93	42	74

c. Elk

Fourteen elk were placed into the West Loop display pasture to provide summer viewing for visitors in March.

The partial albino elk cow from the display herd produced a similarly marked calf. Both have white on throat and belly and down the insides of the legs. It was more prominent on the calf than on the cow.

A six point bull elk was found dead in upper Elk Creek, and a mature bull was found dead in Alexander Basin. A bull elk was poached during the furlough in December, near the north boundary fence. See Section H-17.

One hundred and thirty-eight elk were counted on the Big Game count on September 30th. The tally showed 87 cows and 51 bulls. Calves could not be differentiated from the cows on this count.

Table 12. 1995 NBR year-end elk population estimates.

Classification	Number
Adult Bull	51
Cow	87
Calf	
TOTAL	138

d. Mule Deer

Mule deer are found from Headquarters Ridge and upper Indian Springs south to the Refuge boundary. Two hundred and forty-six mule deer were counted on the Big Game count. This included 157 does, 59 bucks, and 30 fawns. The fawn to doe ratio is thought to be off due to the difficulty some observers may have of aging deer at a distance and on the move.

Table 13. 1995 NBR year-end mule deer population estimates.

Classification	Number
Buck	59
Doe	157
Fawn	30
TOTAL	246

e. White-tailed Deer

Although the Big Game count was moved from spring to fall this year, volunteers from Polson High School did survey Unit I (Mission Creek) on March 25. A total of 181 white-tailed deer were counted with an additional 131 tallied by Bio-tech. Clark in Indian Springs, the bison corrals, and Headquarters Ridge. The total of 212 white-tailed deer counted was thought to be a fairly accurate estimate of the Spring population.

A herd composition count was conducted on September 20th. Fifty does, 26 fawns, and 20 bucks were counted. White-tail deer herd composition was 71% and 29% bucks. The fawn to does ratio was .52. The fall population estimate can be found in Table 14.

The annual Big Game count was conducted on September 30th. Two hundred and two white-tailed deer were counted, with a composition of 140 does, 31 fawns and 31 bucks.

Table 14. 1995 NBR year-end white-tail deer population estimates.

Classification	Number
Adult Buck	61
Doe	150
Fawn	78
TOTAL	289

f. Pronghorn

John Byers, University of Idaho, continued his pronghorn research and helped Refuge staff determine winter survival and birthing. Ten old does were lost of the 12 anticipated. The fawn crop appeared good in May, probably due to USDA Animal Damage Control coyote removal and scare sirens used just prior to fawning. Byers was here again in June to check fawn survival. Byers reported the end of the year count to be 30 males and 55 females.

g. Bighorn Sheep

Jack Hogg, sheep researcher, made a spring review of sheep survival. One eight year old ewe was found dead on the south side. Cause of death could not be determined but the carcass had unusual slash marks on each side. This individual was the most productive ewe in the last 15 years, both in production and in successful parenting. She had raised six offspring and Hogg believes her lifetime production could have been 12. Two males ages three and six, and two females ages six and seven also died. Three of these (one female and two males) disappeared during January-April and the six and seven year old ewes died in April.

In June, ten lambs including seven females and three males were observed. In September, Hogg reported 13 lambs had been born in the spring, and 9 had survived to fall, 2 males and 7 females. Lamb survivorship (birth to end-of-year) was 62%.

A bighorn ram escaped from the Range in November. It was darted by Tribal personnel working with Wiseman, Todd and Clary. After a quarantine period, it was returned to the Range. A second sheep jumped out on the east side but then jumped back in before a major effort to recover him was mounted.

Table 15. 1995 NBR year-end bighorn sheep population.

Sex	Age												Total
	Lamb	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11+	
Male	1	2	4	2	5	1	2	4	1	1	0	1	24
Female	7	2	4	3	3	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	24
Total	8	4	8	5	8	1	3	7	2	1	0	1	48

h. Mountain Goats

The mountain goats were more prevalent near the tour road than in past years. Telephone Mountain and High Point had numerous visitor sightings of the goats, as many as 21 goats were seen.

9. Marine Mammals

Nothing to report.

10. Other Resident Wildlife

a. Black Bear

Throughout the summer season visitors had good viewing of black bears. From mid-May through September, black bears were seen on a regular basis from the Pauline Creek area to High Point. There were three individuals seen regularly, 2 blacks and 1 brown. Other sightings included a sow with cub, a cinnamon colored bear, and a report (unconfirmed by Range personnel) of a grizzly. In mid-November, black bear tracks were seen along the Canal Road by Dave Wiseman.

b. Mountain Lion

In May, two mountain lions were seen on the south side of the Range near Trisky Creek. They were seen from outside the range by a neighbor. A mountain lion with three spotted kittens were seen in the Elk Creek drainage by sheep researcher Rebecca Weigans in November. They were feeding on a mule deer carcass.

c. Coyotes

Sixteen coyotes were removed from the Range, see Section G-15. Coyotes were seen in the Pauline Creek area, and one was spotted in the housing area in December.

d. Otters

Otters were noted twice on the Range in Mission Creek. Two otters were seen mating in April. A female with two young were seen in October.

e. Badger

Badgers were seen twice by visitors, once in April in the display pasture, and once in July near Mission Creek.

f. Grouse

A blue grouse was seen near High Point in August.

g. Bobcat

Bobcats were seen twice in 1995. Once by a visitor, and once by officer Kyle Todd in Elk Lane.

h. Bats

A small footed myotis, *myotis subulatus*, was seen several times by the front door of the Visitor Center in April and May and once in July.

11. Fisheries Resources

Mission Creek continued to support populations of rainbow trout, brown trout, squawfish, whitefish, and suckers. Anglers used the fishing access near the picnic area and along portions of the creek east of the Display Pasture. There is also a fishing access for a portion of the Jocko River along the south end of the Range off State Highway 200.

12. Wildlife Propagation and Stocking

Nothing to report

13. Surplus Animal Disposal

a. Live Bison

Bid sheets for the annual sealed bid sale of live bison were issued August 16, 1995 and were due back by September 11. There were 63 surplus bison animals offered.

Results of the sale are shown in Table 17. There were 23 bidders this year, 13 of them were successful. Last year's high number of bidders (40) and low number of successful bidders (10), may in part be the reason for a decrease in the number of bidders this year. The overall average price of \$1523.93 was up \$250.78 from last year.

Table 18 shows disposition of the bison sold this year. Meier Buffalo Ranch of Long Lake, South Dakota purchased 62% of the bison available. They purchased all of the 2-10+ year old females. Teepee Ring Ranch of Brady, Montana purchased the three yearling females available. The 37 males available were purchased by 12 of the successful bidders. Meier Buffalo Ranch purchased 16 of the 37 males available (13 of the 19 yearlings).

Eighty-one percent of the surplus bison went for breeding purposes. This compares with 82% in 1994 and 63% in 1993.

Two bison, two-year old cows, were donated to the InterTribal Bison Cooperative.

Table 16. Summary of 1995 NBR sealed bid bison sale results.

Group	Number		Successful Bids		Total
	Sold	High	Low	Average	Revenue
Yrlg. Heifers	3	1515.00	1515.00	1515.00	4545.00
2 Yr. Cows	5	1866.00	1866.00	1866.00	9330.00
3 Yr. Cows	5	1811.00	1811.00	1811.00	9055.00
4 Yr. Cows	5	1811.00	1811.00	1811.00	9055.00
6 Yr. Cows	3	1811.00	1811.00	1811.00	5433.00
10+ Yr. Cows	5	1511.00	1511.00	1511.00	7555.00
Yrlg. Bulls	19	1250.00	1107.00	1134.15	21549.00
2 Yr. Bulls	4	1400.00	1242.00	1285.50	5142.00
3 Yr. Bulls	2	1442.00	1442.00	1442.00	2884.00
4 Yr. Bulls	3	1650.00	1433.00	1537.66	4613.00
6 Yr. Bulls	1	1623.00	1623.00	1623.00	1623.00
7 Yr. Bulls	2	1823.00	1823.00	1823.00	3646.00
8 Yr. Bulls	2	1977.00	1923.00	1950.00	3900.00
9 Yr. Bulls	1	2055.00	2055.00	2055.00	2055.00
10+ Yr. Bulls	3	1877.00	1851.00	1859.66	5579.00
TOTAL					\$95,964.00

Table 17. Disposition of 1995 NBR sale buffalo.

State	Breeding	Slaughter/Feedlot	Total	Percent
Idaho	1	0	1	1%
Montana	6	9	15	24%
South Dakota	39	0	39	62%
North Dakota	3	0	3	5%
Washington	3	2	5	8%
TOTAL	52	11	63	100%

b. Elk

Elk were transplanted to the Marion/Ashley Lake area Northwest of Kalispell, Montana. Twenty one cows and four bulls were captured and released by NBR staff with the aid of Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks helicopter. One elk which died during the corral operations was donated to the Salish Cultural Committee.



Dean Vaughan, Tim Driscoll, and Doc Johnson taking a blood sample from an elk. 3/95

14. Scientific Collections

Nothing to report.

15. Animal Control

a. Coyote

USDA Animal Damage Control carried out helicopter coyote removal in March. Environmental Assessment allowed the removal of 15 coyotes. Eleven were taken in the Alexander Basin pronghorn birthing area and an additional five were removed from adjacent private lands, at landowner's request.

16. Marking and Banding

Erv Davis, bluebird box volunteer, began banding operations in April. He recovered a banded female mountain bluebird nesting in the same box where she was banded last season. He banded 84 mountain bluebirds, 7 after hatch females and 77 nestlings. He banded 5 western bluebirds, 1 after hatch female and 4 nestlings.

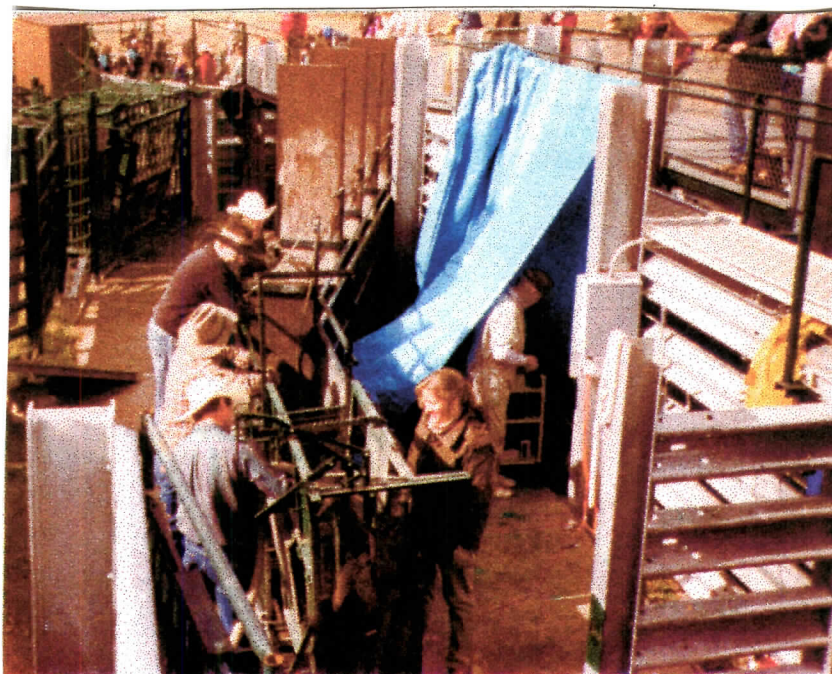


Volunteer Erv Davis checking a bluebird nest box.

17. Disease Prevention and Control

The practice of vaccinating bison heifer calves for brucellosis was continued at Roundup this year. Bison of all ages received an annual booster of 5-way leptospirosis vaccine.

Testing was done at Roundup on all of the sale animals for brucellosis and tuberculosis. The tests were all negative.



Volunteers and staff at calf chute at Roundup. 10/95

H. PUBLIC USE

1. General

Early season visitation was down from 1994 numbers (a record year) but the total annual visitation was up from all other previous years. However, visitation was higher during the "summer" season months of May to August - an increase of about 9%. Annual visitor totals still reached 211,100 which is the second highest visitation to date, exceeded only by the 1993 record year of 217,200. Visitors through the front gate totaled 176,300 with an additional 34,800 using the Ravalli Hill viewing site. Over 5,500 people visited the range during the 4th of July weekend, the highest to date and 800 more than the 1994 weekend visitation. Visitors from foreign countries were 10% of the people who registered at the Visitor Center. The highest percentage continues to be from Germany (22% of all foreign visitors registered) with 17% from Scandinavian countries and 15% from the United Kingdom.

Entrance fees were charged again this season with a \$4 per car Day Pass and all Golden Passes and the Federal Duck Stamp accepted for admission. There were separate rates for commercial buses and vans, with senior citizens groups exempted. Fees were previously charged during the 1988 and 1989 seasons with a \$2 per car admission. Fees were charged from the time the longer Red Sleep Mountain Drive opened May 13 through its closure October 20.

Fee collections for the season were as follows:

Day Passes	\$43,728.00
Tour Groups	1,059.00
Golden Eagle pass	8,350.00
Golden Age pass	2,370.00
Golden Access Pass	FREE - 63 issued
Duck Stamps	1,185.00
TOTAL	\$56,692.00

The Refuge's 30% share equals \$16,652 to be put into the 4960 account, a no-year fund for public use. The \$1,185.00 of Duck Stamp money goes into the national fund to purchase habitat.

Organized tours brought 3,875 visitors in 110 groups, about 12% more than 1994. Established tour companies, such as Allied, Saga, National Park Tours and Vantage brought about a fourth of the people. Eleven foreign groups accounted for 287 of these visitors. A number of organizations held meetings at the Range including the Flathead Reservation Fish and Wildlife Board.

Visitors attending special events includes: 2,800 for Roundup (down from the previous year due to cool, rainy weather), 300 riders for the annual Mission Rangers Saddle Club Ride in May and 400 in summer Day Camp programs. Holiday numbers were up for the most part from previous years with visitation as follows: Mother's Day, 2,400; Memorial Day, 5,032; Father's Day, 1,440; Fourth of July, 5,500; and Labor Day, 4,100. Mother's Day, Memorial Day and the Fourth of July weekends exceeded all past years.

Scout activities on the Range included special activities for Cub Scout Day Camps, Girl Scout activities and the area Boy Scout Antler Collection Project. In all, 236 Scouts participated in activities on the Range. This was up by 100 scouts and included a pack from New Jersey.

The Range was selected as one of two sites for the monitoring program pilot of the Customer Service Survey. This was conducted in July by the University of Idaho. Over a period of about a week, 950 self-addressed, pre-paid questionnaire cards were distributed to visitors. Of these, 458 were returned, a 48% compliance. Overall results came out to a 63% very good rating, 28% good, 2% average. We are especially proud of the 98% good to very good rating for staff courtesy and prompt service. The lowest ratings came from expectations of a high-quality recreational experience with only 78% of the respondents rating in the good to very good range. A good visitor experience depends greatly on the number and kinds of wildlife seen along the drives and gaining "wildlife cooperation" is out of our control.

Sheri Fetherman, RO Chief of Education and Visitor Services and Shannon Heath, from the Montana Ecological Services office, were here in September for a public use visit.

2. Outdoor Classrooms - Students

Major emphasis on education continued. School groups had just over 5,500 participants and spent approximately 23,500 hours in learning activities on the Bison Range. Schools were scheduled at both the Visitor Center and the ponds and other outdoor education sites to give them exclusive use of these areas during their visit. All groups received special programs presented by staff. The four habitat types and a wide range of wildlife provide for a broad based education program.

The Bison Range caters to all grade and ability levels from head start and developmentally disabled through graduate students. Of the 154 school groups visiting the Range this year, 1049 students in 37 groups were in University Classes and 6 foreign student groups had 146 students. The majority of programs are held on the Range but one special activity was held at the Glacier View School. Bill Peterson, who was here for a Law Enforcement Detail from Flint Hills NWR, demonstrated flint napping, primitive fire starting and rope making with natural fibers to the students of Glacier View.

Information was provided for many student research papers and projects covering bison, genetics, brucellosis, population dynamics, behavior and management as well as other natural history topics ranging from pest management, bird houses and feeders and native grasslands. Requests come from students throughout the United States as well as from local students.

3. Outdoor Classrooms - Teachers

Some 722 teachers spent 2,565 activity hours on the Bison Range participating in outdoor education activities with their students or at the spring and fall Teacher Workshops. Twenty teachers attended the Spring Discovery Workshop in early May. Participants had the chance to explore Nature Study by Computer along with Predators and their Prey. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation co-sponsored the September workshop and included their Wild About Elk program. We also had a flint napping and primitive fire starting exhibition by Bill Peterson. The day was enjoyed by 36 teachers. Teachers can receive OPI (Office of Public Instruction) credits for attending workshops at the Bison Range.



Bill Peterson demonstrating flint napping at the Fall Discovery Workshop.

The outdoor education lending library of lesson plans and other resource materials for field trips and classroom activities continued to be available to teachers. Demand for the folders seem to be dropping. A new "advertising" program may be needed to inform new teachers and educators of this resource. The display collection of hands-on teaching aids, including skulls, study skins, nests and other natural materials were used by almost every visiting school class.

4. Interpretive Foot Trails

The Nature Trails located in the day use area were heavily used by school groups for outdoor education activities. In addition approximately 50,000 visitors walked and viewed wildlife along the ponds and in the riparian habitat traversed by these trails. Portions of the Teacher Workshops and Summer Day Camps were conducted in this area. The accessible fishing bridge has now been completed and paved trails provide good access for people with disabilities.

The Bitterroot and Highpoint Trails, accessed from the Red Sleep Mountain Drive, provided short walks to view the bitterroots in the spring and other wildflowers and to reach the highest point of the Range at 4,884 ft. These trails were closed at the end of July while the bison were in the area. Bison are in rut during July and August and there was concern for visitor safety. The trails reopened in the fall after the bison were moved to a different pasture.

5. Interpretive Tour Routes

There are four different interpretive tour routes. The 19-mile Red Sleep Mountain Drive gains 2,100 feet in elevation and is closed during the winter months. It opened for the season on May 14. The tour closed down June 6 and 7 due to snow and ice - an unusual occurrence for June. The long tour closed for the season on October 21.

The shorter Prairie Drive and West Loop are the only routes available to tour groups because they are pretty well committed to the shorter drives due to the large size of buses.

The Winter Drive offered a two-way 10-mile round trip when the upper reaches of the long tour were closed for the winter. It also provided excellent viewing for school buses, giving them early and late season viewing without traveling the winding Red Sleep Drive.

Traffic counters showed that approximately 180,000 people used Bison Range tour roads in 1995 with about 70,000 traveling the 19-mile Red Sleep Mountain Drive when it was open mid-May to the end of October. The balance used the shorter Prairie Drive and West Loop or the seasonal Winter Drive. This is a 20% increase in overall use and a 75% increase in use of the longer Red Sleep Mountain Drive.

Two guided tours were given to 47 people which included the Montana Conservation Corps in February and a group in June from the Department of the Interior and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

Coloring sheets, consisting of a photocopy of a prairie scene (from the cover of the Grassland Ecology Teacher's guide) was offered as a handout to children. It was well received and we will continue to offer it and other activity pages.

6. Interpretive Exhibits/Demonstrations

Fees were again payable at the Visitor Center and this brings a large number of visitors into the building. Once there, they viewed the displays on bison, bison history and other wildlife materials. Approximately 37,000 saw interpretive videos. An interpreter was always on duty to provide visitor information and to answer questions about the wildlife and habitats on the Range. The center was open daily from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. from mid-May through the end of October, and from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on weekdays for the balance of the year.

Wildlife mounts of a pronghorn and black bear and rugs of a black bear and mountain lion were loaned by local residents Tom and Sandy Shook. A grizzly bear rug was loaned by Ray Harbin. These were hung in the Visitor Center along with the Range mounts. Together with the full mount bison, this has added greatly to the information available to visitors about what wildlife is found on the Range and what they look like. The Bison priscus replica skull cast was also hung in the Visitor Center with interpretive information on this ancient giant bison. The skull is on loan from Robert Petty.

An interpretive kiosk in the Visitor Center parking area provided information about the refuge and visitor safety. The Field Guide to the National Bison Range, which includes a Range map, was available at this site.

Outreach activities included off-refuge talks and programs presented to approximately 1,300 people. Recipients included civic, resource and sportsmen's groups and Career Days programs throughout western Montana. Assistant manager West gave numerous presentations on biological weed control and the conservation easement program. Private lands biological technician Vaughan spoke at several wetland and conservation meetings.

Outdoor Recreation Planner Bishop was part of a panel on the history and future direction of environmental education in Montana at the annual meeting of the Montana Environmental Education Association in Great Falls.

Media coverage included a PBS special on the noxious weed purple loosestrife and featured an interview with Assistant Manager West. KPAX-TV presented a two-segment news special about the Annual Bison Roundup and National Wildlife Refuge Week. News releases included information about the Teacher Workshops and activities available on Migratory Bird Day. There were numerous local newspaper articles and letters to the editor featuring the proposed compacting of the Range by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. This included a 2/3 page sized, statewide ad on compacting developed and paid for by the CS&KT.

7. Other Interpretive Programs

Nothing to report.

8. Hunting

Nothing to report.

9. Fishing

Fishing is allowed in accordance with state, tribal and refuge regulations along portions of Mission Creek and the Jocko River that lie within the boundaries of the Bison Range. A joint State and Tribal license and fishing stamp is required. An estimated 95 individuals fished in Mission Creek. The area was closed in September due to bison being pastured there and because of bear sightings.

10. Trapping

Nothing to report.

11. Wildlife Observation

Visitors spent an estimated 200,000 activity hours observing wildlife along the Bison Range scenic drives and nature trails. Most often observed were bison, elk, pronghorn antelope and white-tail and mule deer. There was excellent viewing of bighorn rams throughout the summer along Red Sleep Mountain Drive, especially between High Point and Turkey Woman Draw. There was one older ram that was seen very regularly next to, and even on, the tour road. Law Enforcement staff nicknamed him "Henry." It was also a good year to see black bears during the late summer feeding on berries in Pauline Creek. Even the elusive mountain goats, usually seen only from Highway 212, were spotted a few times from High Point.

12. Other Wildlife Oriented-Recreation

Visitors to roundup this year totaled 2,850, despite rainy weather. About 38 volunteers helped during this event, including the horse-mounted volunteers which parked cars. Visitors included 1,196 students and teachers as part of 17 school groups. This turned out to be 8 less schools but close to 200 more students. New corrals provided more space and convenience for viewing groups and full accessibility to wheelchairs. During the two days of roundup, classes were still limited to students from grades 4 and above for safety reasons due to the press of crowds. Younger students and those requiring special assistance were given an option of viewing loading operations later in the week. A Roundup Leaflet and video programs at the corrals provided schools and other visitors with information about the roundup. The Visitor Center carried special hands on displays and films on bison biology.



Pat Jamieson leading a beginning bird hike in the Nature Trail area.

International Migratory Bird Day was celebrated on May 13, in conjunction with the opening of the Red Sleep Mountain Drive. Pat Jamieson and Lynn Clark lead bird hikes. Volunteer Erv Davis gave a bluebird nest box and banding demonstration. The day was also celebrated with free posters and computer interactive bird games.

National Wildlife Refuge Week was celebrated during Roundup. Information and free posters were distributed to all school groups. This is the first year of a planned yearly event to boost national recognition of the Refuge System.

13. Camping

Camp grounds for the general public are not provided on the Bison Range. The Environmental Education Campsite was used by 28 University of Montana students from the Yellow Bay Biological Station during a small mammal projects. The University of Idaho had 3 groups consisting of 39 students each camp during a 2 week period in May for a Land Use Field Trip.

14. Picnicking

School groups and summer day camps used the shaded picnic area as a study and staging area. This site was also welcomed by visitors since there are few visitor services within

miles and roads were often hot and dusty. Accessible tables, restrooms and nature trail are also available from this site.

15. Off-Road Vehicle Use

Nothing to report.

16. Other Non-Wildlife Oriented Recreation

Nothing to report.

17. Law Enforcement

Law enforcement on the National Bison Range is handled by Manager Dave Wiseman, Assistant Manager Bill West and Bio-Tech Lynn Clark. Wiseman and West act as backup and handle weekends and evenings during the winter. Clark is primary law enforcement during the summer. Kyle Todd was hired as a park ranger/patrolman for the summer season. Cal Henry, Lee Metcalf NWR, was detailed to NBR for weekends during the month of May, until Todd came on duty. Bill Peterson was detailed to NBR from Flint Hills NWR to help with law enforcement duties. He was stationed here from August 22 through October 3, 1995.

Flat tires, keys locked in cars, overheated vehicles and brakes are some of the common problems for LE during the busy summer season. In May, a man hid a car on NBR to keep his wife from finding it during divorce proceedings. The vehicle was recovered by the wife who had the title. A number of trespass incidents were investigated. One involved a DUI driver who crashed the NBR boundary fence along a county road. The individual thought he should not be charged with trespass since he didn't know where he was.

West and Clark attended an LE refresher in Arizona. A firearms inventory was completed in April. Rick Branzell, Special Agent, came on September 28 for firearm requalification. Clark, West, Todd, Peterson, and Wiseman participated. Clark, West, Todd, and Peterson monitored Ninepipe NWR, Pablo NWR, and WPA's during waterfowl and pheasant season.

A bull elk was poached on the Bison Range during the furlough period. Just the head was removed and the incident is under investigation.

Tony Rebich, was convicted, in February 1995, of 3 felonies and 1 misdemeanor in connection with the deer poaching incident at NBR in 1992. Investigating officer Tony Pinelli traveled to Butte to testify in the 4-day jury trial. Curt McPherson received a \$400 Montana, Fish, Wildlife, and Parks reward for information leading to prosecution and conviction of this case. Mr. Rebich is noted to have spent over \$60,000 defending himself of this crime, not because he might lose his high school teaching certificate, but because Pope and Young record book officials have indicated he will lose his two record

mule deer listings if found guilty. Mr. Rebich appealed this decision to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals and lost there also. He had been charged with wildlife crimes on seven previous occasions and had been convicted of none. Persistence finally paid dividends.

Table 18. Violation notices issued on NBR in 1995.

Violation	# of Cases	Bond	Disposition
Wrong Way on One-Way	2	\$ 75	Posted Bond
Wrong Way on One-Way	1	\$ 75	Pending
Hiking Away from Vehicle	2	\$ 100	Posted Bond
Trespass during closed season	1	\$ 100	Pending
Attempting to take migratory game bird after legal shooting hours	1	\$ 49	Pending
TOTAL	7	\$ 399	4 Posted Bond 3 Pending

18. Cooperating Associations

Sales of books and wildlife posters through the Glacier Natural History Association (GNHA) book outlet totaled \$29,675, compared to \$29,947 for 1994. The Association donations for 1992, 1993, 1994, were held over for the design, set up and printing of Field Guide to the National Bison Range. The donation for 1995 was used for a reprinting of the Field Guide. The staff at both GNHA and NBR continued to work together to update and improve the quality and quantity of the merchandise available to the visitors to the Refuge.

19. Concessions

Nothing to report.

I. EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES

1. New Construction

Nothing to report.

2. Rehabilitation

A variety of rehabilitation projects were undertaken in 1995. Shop storage was upgraded for a drill press and saws. Cabinets were built for the fire garage. Additional storage shelves were built in both the shop and Visitor Center. A new pressure tank was installed for the Visitor Center water system. The pump and pressure tank for the shop was replaced. Quarters 63 was repainted and recarpeted. The Visitor Center furnace and ceiling light fixtures were repaired, and office walls were repainted. Skip Palmer refurbished and rehung a dozen wildlife mounts that hang in the Visitor Center.

In February, an old transformer on the underground power line to the bison corral area was found to contain PCB's and was replaced by the Mission Valley Power Company.

3. Major Maintenance

Major items included frequent checking and repair of boundary and interior fences, blading and spot graveling of the tour roads and patrolling trails as needed, maintenance of vehicles and equipment, repainting and posting of signs and shoeing and care of the horse string. Throughout the year, springs and water troughs were monitored and cleaned or repaired as needed. Mowing, trimming, and irrigation of the Picnic Area and headquarters grounds also took a good share of the summer maintenance time. Several days were devoted to brush clearing and cleanup. In July, cleanup was required after a storm downed 15 trees in the picnic/EE area alone. Lighting in the office area was replaced with energy efficient fixtures.

Pat Gonzales continued efforts to insure cleanup of the underground fuel contamination at the Moiese Store.

4. Equipment Utilization and Replacement

A new motor was installed in the fork lift. Irrigation pipe was picked up at the Umatilla NWR, Oregon. The pipe will be used to help fill wetlands with pumped water. A surplus ambulance was acquired and will be shared with the Charlo Volunteer Fire Department.



Moving office trailer into place behind the Visitor Center. 7/95

A 14 X 70 foot mobile home was transferred from the Bureau of Reclamation in Lyman, Wyoming. This mobile home was acquired to ease some of the crowded office conditions. Power and phone were installed, the roof replaced, the furnace was converted to propane, steps constructed, sidewalk poured, and final landscaping was done. The trailer temporarily housed Bill Peterson, a detailed LE, for several months before being used for office space.

Underground storage tanks at the shop were removed. The fuel storage area was rebuilt, new tanks installed, and concrete bases for the tanks were poured.

Items purchased during the year for updating, replacement, and for safety reasons include: two saddles, a 1995 Trailmann 18 foot gooseneck trailer, and a 1995 Ford 4 X 4. A 1991 Kawasaki ATV was transferred from Flint Hills NWR. The old fire pump tank was destroyed and the 1988 Chevrolet truck was sold.

5. Communications Systems

Radio communication is important on the Refuge due to the variety of work performed and distance some employees must travel. Three mobile Bendix King radios were transferred from Browns Park NWR in Maybell, Colorado. An additional four MaxTrac mobile radios were purchased from Scott Communications.

6. Computer Systems

A Swinter electronic typewriter was purchased for the use by Admin. Assist. Joan Krantz, replacing an IBM corrective Select II.

7. Energy Conservation

Nothing to report.

8. Other

Nothing to report.

J. OTHER ITEMS

1. Cooperative Programs

The cooperative antler salvage effort with the Charlo Boy Scout Troop and the Glacier Natural History Association continued for the eleventh year. This year 15 scouts and 4 adults spent part of 10 work days totaling 542.5 hours collecting shed deer and elk antlers. Ten scouts and four adults spent part of three days sorting, weighing, and selling the antlers. Dropped elk antlers from the current year averaged \$8.47, and deer antlers \$8.27. The sale grossed \$2278.64, with a permit fee of \$110.58 going to the Service, a donation of \$1437.56 to Glacier Natural History Association, and the Boy Scouts getting \$663.50. These amounts are down from 1994 total with the sale price being less. There was speculation over possible antler poaching as in 1994 65 elk antlers and 56 deer antler were picked up, and the numbers in 1995 were 19 elk antlers and 43 deer antlers.

Other cooperative programs we were active in this year included:

Colonial Nesting Bird Survey - Bishop and Clark

Mourning Dove Coo Counts - Clark

Breeding Bird Census - Arlee, St. Regis and Polson Routes - Bishop, Clark, Jamieson

Resident Bird Count at The Nature Conservancy's Safe Harbor Marsh - Bishop
Audubon Christmas Bird Count - Jamieson, Bishop

Duck Banding: USFWS, Montana Co-op Unit, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks,
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribe - Clark

2. Other Economic Uses

Nothing to report.

3. Items of Interest

Nothing to report.

4. Tribal Issues

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes began compacting plans for operation of the Bison Range under the Indian Self-governance Act, in 1994. This law authorizes Tribes to apply for management of some government operations, other than BIA functions, if they can prove a geographical, cultural or historical connection. Manager Wiseman spent considerable time throughout the year addressing this issue. Wiseman briefed Congressional staff, RO staff, NBR staff and concerned public.

In April, about 100-150 Valley citizens held a protest rally on the Polson Court House steps to oppose the compacting of NBR and other issues. Some have been obtaining signatures of valley residents who object to such a transfer. There were numerous rumors and letters to the editor. A group of private citizens organized a rally, in support of continuing USFWS management of the Bison Range, in the NBR picnic area on May 13.

Dale Henry, Refuge Operations Chief, led initial negotiations with the Tribes on the Self-governance request for compacting during June. Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Ada Deer and her deputy Mike Anderson were in the area for the signing of the Tribal Retrocession Agreement. Anderson visited the Range briefly and was given a short tour with Refuge staff and Tribal officials. Henry, Wiseman, West and Bishop were guests of the Tribes for lunch. Wiseman gave a staff briefing following these meetings.

During July, Wiseman traveled to Regional Office in Denver and Washington, DC to discuss compacting issues. Information on compacting issues was requested by Defenders of Wildlife, and the Audubon Society.

Wiseman participated in a meeting with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes in the regional office in Denver, on August 8. A second meeting with the Tribes was held at KwaTakNuk Resort in Polson. This meeting included Dale Henry and Al Kashinski of the Regional Office. Assistant Director Dan Ashe of the FWS Washington office and Susan Brooke, staff person of Senator Conrad Burns, conducted a public hearing at the Polson Court House on August 28. Wiseman completed a Bison Policy draft and was asked to draft a letter of response for President Clinton.

Dale Henry from Regional Office held a staff briefing at the Range, on September 1, discussing the potential effects of negotiations and annual funding agreement concerning the Tribal Self-Governance Act, the Confederated Salish-Kootenai Tribes, and the National Bison Range.

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes met with Mollie Beattie in Washington D.C., early in November and requested compacting of all NBR operations. This proposal was not accepted and a counter proposal offered.

In December 1995, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes ran a series of 2/3 page ads in newspapers throughout Montana which related to their proposal to manage the Bison Range.

5. Credits

Lynn Clark - Sections E2; G

Pat Jamieson - Sections E4; H1-16

Joan Krantz - Sections E5; I5-6

Terri Middlemist - Sections A; B; D5; E1,6-8; H18; I1-3; Word Processing and Assembly

Bill West - Sections D2-4; F; H17

Dave Wiseman - Section J4

K. FEEDBACK